DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 129 745 SP 010 458

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TITLE Twenty-one Ways to Develop Esprit De Corps Among Your Student Officials.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (San Diego, California, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Athletic Coaches; Athletic Programs; *Athletics; *Attitudes; *Guidelines; *Intramural Athletic Programs; *Morale; *Physical Education; Student Attitudes; Students
IDENTIFIERS *Student Athletic Officials

ABSTRACT

Student officials for intramural sports can be given special training to enhance their aptitude in the field, but their attitude is more difficult to develop. This paper suggests 21 ways to develop attitude among student officials. Some of the suggestions are: Athletic departments should emphasize the role of the official in the intramural program; assure them support in their judgment calls; assure them that abuse will not be tolerated; pay them well; institute an incentive pay program; provide uniforms; provide NCAA rulebooks for study; evaluate them often; avoid competition; reward better officials by assigning them playoff games; assist them in getting outside paid officiating jobs; provide them with proper recognition; encourage the best officials to serve as tournament directors in other sports; and encourage idea exchange and informal meetings among student officials. (JMF)

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21 WAYS TO DEVELOP ESPRIT DE CORPS AMONG YOUR STUDENT OFFICIALS

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No matter how many sports you offer or how big you make your trophies, the success of your intramural sports program will, by and large, lie with the caliber of student officials you provide for your team sports--the backbone of your program.

Student officials are hard to come by at best. Good student officials are a rare breed; that is, unless you are able to develop an atmosphere whereby students are as anxious to become a part of your "team" of officials as they would be in becoming a part of a traditionally successful varsity team.

To be top drawer in most anything, aptitude and attitude are essential ingredients. Aptitude in officials can be enhanced through clinics and on-the-job training. However, the attitude of the officials is a little more difficult to nurture. Here are 21 ways to develop esprit de corps among your officials:

1. Emphasize at your pre-season rules clinics that you expect the students to be signing up as officials in your program for more than just the money. They must realize that they have volunteered to help you provide first-class, professionally-run tournaments for the intramural athletes.

2. They must be convinced of the fact that you will back them 100% in their judgment calls.

3. They must be shown that you will not tolerate their being physically nor unduly, verbally abused by players, coaches or spectators. You would show this support while supervising the games. Furthermore, this would be a major point of emphasis to be made during your pre-season organizational meetings with the coaches of the teams.

4. Pay your officials well. A minimum wage is not very attractive in view of the tremendous responsibilities and errorless efforts which will be exptected of them.

5. Institute an incentive pay program wherein officials returning for their second, third and fourth years would be paid more (perhaps 25-50 cents) per game than that of the rookie officials. The proficiency of your officials is in direct proportion to the number of veterans available. Present an "Intramural Staff" nylon jacket, sport shirt or T-shirt to an official who is serving in your program for the third year or more.

6. Provide them with professional-looking referee's shirts. Help them look the part. Improvised striped shirts or pinnies only serve to hinder the image of the officials. By the same token, the officials should be expected to wear clean

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trousers or shorts to complement the shirts. You should also have the shirts laundered regularly.

7. Provide each official with an NCAA rulebook so that he can study the "gospel" and be able to carry it with him during his game.

8. Observe and evaluate your officials frequently, if not daily. Criticize them privately. Praise them publicly. Compliment an official on his strong points before pointing out his weaknesses. Emphasize that your criticisms are for his benefit--to help him improve as an official.

9. As an incentive, let it be known that through your evaluations the better officials will be assigned more often. (This may prevent the slow-improving official from gaining experience, however, most intramural athletes are not very patient with late-blossoming officials.)

10. Encourage your officials to form "crews" whereby the same two or three officials would work together on each of their games. Better teamwork will result sooner than if they were assigned to different officials on each game. (This is the same system used by officials in professional sports.)

11. Never assign all rookie officials to the same game. Always have at least one veteran on the crew. The rookies will appreciate it.

12. Avoid competition among the officials such as "Official of the Week", "Best Official", etc. No matter who makes the ratings--players, coaches, fellow officials or yourself--the officials will always second-guess each selection. Furthermore, why make one official happy while making the rest of them mad. Your mortality rate may increase accordingly.

13. Reward your better officials by assigning them to the playoff games. Everyone will know that those officials assigned to the championship game are the ones whom you consider the best. However, when assigning the officials for that final game, list twice or three times as many alternates and make a notation that "each official listed--regular or alternate--is considered qualified to handle the championship game, but unfortunately, only three could be chosen". You should also announce that "those not selected should regard it as a challenge to return next year to demonstrate marked improvement".

14. Assist your officials in getting paid officiating assignments in local recreation, boys' clubs or church leagues. Be certain, however, that these outside games are not scheduled in conflict with your program.

15. Inform your officials that upon their graduation from college you would be most happy to recommend them to their local commissioner of officials in the event they would want to continue officiating as a "moonlighting" profession.

16. Devote a full page in your intramural sports handbook to recognition of your officials. This could be picture of them as a group or a listing of their names along with the sports which they handled and how many years that they have been on the officials' staff.

17. When taking the picture of your team champions for next year's

handbook, include the game officials. And, of course, add their names to the picture's caption.

18. Encourage your more administratively-sound officials to serve as tournament directors in your other team and individual sports. Tournament directors should also be well paid, receive a staff jacket and be included on the officials' page in the handbook as well as in the pictures of the championship individuals and teams.

19. Include your student officials and tournament directors in your Table of Organization as depicted in your handbook or on your intramural bulletin board.

20. Initiate and encourage informal gatherings of your officials in your office, lounge area or local hangout wherein officiating experiences can be shared, rules can be discussed and interpreted and field/court mechanics can be reviewed. Foster a club or fraternal atmosphere.

21. Love your officials as if they were members of your own team--because they are.

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